19: Kharuzin -- 59 -61 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut-1-2
116, 241, 423

The wealth of land, the vast extent of land holdings, and the semi-nomadic [60] character of the life of the Yakuts explains the wide application among them of the rights to occupy and freely utilize land. There is still much land "belonging to no one;" occupation of such land is permitted, and the setting up of stakes is considered sufficient proof that a given portion of land or fishing site has been occupied by some person. But the bringing of the occupied land into a cultivation state with his own labor and means makes the occupant its master. (1) The same right is acquired by the person who builds

1. Cf. Prince Kostrov. Ocherk iuridicheskoe byta IAutov [Juridical Customs of the Yakut]. Vsesoiuznoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo, Vostochno-Sibirskii Otdel, Zapiski, Otdielenie Etnografii, VIII, pp. 285 ff.; also Vrutsevich, XVII, No. 2, pp. 14-15.

a home on an occupied piece of land. Therefore he who sows on someone else's land must pay the owner an amount equal to the rent on the sown portion of land; likewise, if anyone should construct a house on land occupied by someone else, he is obliged either to tear it down or pay rent. However the owner does not have the right to forbid anyone to use the roads running through his field: the latter is shut off, and the passerby has the obligation of shutting the gates of the enclosure after going through. Vacant sites are occupied by the Yakuts principally for agriculture or for making hay, or finally for

fishing purposes. The right of ownership of these sections, based on occupation and labor is guaranteed by the community. But this right does not extend to the water and the wooded sections: they remain for the use of all the members of the community, and the owner does not have the right to forbid anyone to take water from the lakes and rivers on his section of land, to gather berries, cut down trees or hunt for wild animals and birds.

The owner of a section of land can turn to his profit any increment arising from the deposit of sand or silt on the bank of the river occupied by him, but only up to the middle of the river; therefore the islands, for example, lying between the occupied bank and the middle of the river, eo-ipso form part of the occupied section.

The ploughed land, cleared and cultivated through the efforts of the family occupying the section, as well as the land that goes with the farmstead, customarily is not divided. This is explained by [61] the general investment of labor (of the whole family) in its development, as well as the fact that agriculture up to our time has not played a principal role in the economic life of the Yakut community, which, under the conditions of the dominance of the cattle raising economy, willingly permits its individual members to occupy vacant lands and own them without any obstacles.

19: Kharuzin -- 61 E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut -1-2
116, 423, 556, 651, 686

But with regard to meadows, whose significance for the Yakut community, thanks to the cattle raising economy, is extremely great, the Yakuts, under the influence of the system for levying taxes, have elaborated other, more accurate modes of utilization than those based on occupation. With regard to the sharing of meadow sites among the Yakuts of the district studied by Mr. Pripuzov, a system of divisions has been established which are made on the basis of social contracts for 10 years and more. Fixed terms for the divisions apparently do not exist. The meadows are customarily divided into three categories, with corresponding taxes [RCH: presumably taxes paid to the Russian government] and obligations imposed on the separate families. The most powerful households have meadow lands of the first category--40 cart loads; the second category, assigned to the well-to-do, gives 20 cart loads; and finally the third category, for the poor, gives 10 cart loads. Only those who have meadow lands of the 1st category can be elected elders. The community vigilantly guards after the punctual payment and fulfillment of his obligations by each Yakut; for the performance of the latter, it is permitted to hire another person. In the case of defaulting payers of taxes the community takes away their section of meadow land or part of it and rents it out to cover the arrears. (1)

1. Mr. Pripuzov makes mention of rather interesting information concerning local measurements among the Yakuts. Although the Yakuts are generally acquainted with Russian measurements, they make simultaneously use of

their own. Thus, the circumference of a haystack is given in terms of sagenes-bylas; the hides of larger animals are measured in soles-ullugakh; small objects (bridles, axes, etc.) are measured by the spread of the hand-tu-tum; or by the distance between the thumb and middle finger-kharys. The thickness of fat on meat is measured in fingers-ili. The length of a road is defined by a unit which is equal to about 10 versts- kyos (a word which, according to Mr. Pripuzov, is equivalent to: "to travel or to move from one place to another with cattle and household utensils"), or by a day's march- kundyuk. Finally, the time of the day is designated in accordance with the nomad cattle-breeder's way of life, as the time of milking the cows and mares; a smaller unit of time is that required to cook a meal- uyos-bystyna.

[RCH: This footnote has been reproduced in the files under separate categories; see category 804, p. 61 this source]

19: Kharuzin -- 62 [3] E-4 (no date) 1898 Yakut
116, 423, 437

Barter is widespread among the Yakuts. The objects of barter can be sections of land; in such cases the barter takes place with the knowledge of the elders and the society. A note is made of the exchange of lands which has taken place in a special book, in which are written down all the Yakut "meadow lands, with an indication of the designation of each survey mark, the boundaries of the given section, and the quantity of hay obtained from it," together with the category to which it pertains.

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

developed class relationships and certain very archaic survivals of ancient times. By the time the Russians arrived in the first half of the 17th century, the Yakuts had divided up into independent tribes. The largest and strongest of these were the Kangalastsy and Namsy on the left bank of the Lena, and the Megins, Borogons, Betuns and Baturustsy between the Lena and the Amga; these very large tribes (to judge by the Russian tribute registers) numbered from 2000 to 5000 persons each. The smaller tribal groupings, some of which were independent and some of which belonged to those mentioned above, were reckoned in dozens. In the Russian sources these tribes are called "volosts," but the Yakut name for them was evidently d'on or aymakh. These tribes often warred with one another, and sometimes banded together temporarily for joint operations. All members of one tribe were considered fellow clansmen, which, among other things, was indicated by the fact that the "volosts" were exogamic groups. In turn, the tribes divided into smaller clan groups. The bond between fellow clansmen showed up in the custom of mutual assistance and vendetta, which, incidentally, was often replaced by blood money.

At this period, however, the clan-tribal structure was already in a state of decomposition. The tribes and clans were headed by the military aristocracy—the toyons. These possessed large herds of cattle and employed the labor of slaves and dependent fellow clansmen on their farms; they were also the military leaders. Heading detachments of armed servants and junior fellow clansmen, the toyons raided each other's territory, and frequently looted the farms of the free members of the community, seizing their cattle and destroying their economic independence. These toyon wars and raids were one of the factors which speeded up the decomposition of the clan commune. The ruined members of the commune were reduced to the status of "balyksyts" (poor people without cattle, or fishermen), or else became the indentured slaves of the toyons. Most of the slaves (kuluts or bokans) originated in this way.

The system of slavery among the Yakuts was fairly peculiar in form, containing certain patriarchal elements. The number of slaves was small; even the richer toyons had no more than 15 or 20, and much more frequently there were one to three slaves for each master. The slave usually had his own family and often lived in a separate yurt. Slavery was hereditary. Some of the slaves—the adult males—were part of the armed band of the toyon. On the other hand, cases were known in which the slaves led a hard life and their masters treated them cruelly, and we also know of the manifestation, although embryonic, of class feeling against exploitation (flight by groups of slaves and so on).

The problem of whether or not there was feudalism among the Yakuts before the Russians arrived still remains unsolved in Soviet historical-ethnographic literature.

Some writers (S. V. Bakhrushin and O. V. Ionova) think that early feudal relations among the Yakuts began to form in the pre-Russian period; they consider the presence of groups of semidependent people "living close to" the toyons, as well as the custom of lending cattle for grazing (the later khahaas), to be signs of this. Tokarev considers that a feudal-type relationship only began to form among the Yakuts after they had been annexed to Russia.

As regards land ownership, the older communal-clan system was still in force just before the Russians arrived. The communal form of land use not only predominated in forest hunting grounds and pastures, but the fisheries and even the meadows were still by and large in common use. Nevertheless, the meadows and fisheries had already been taken over to

Nevertheless, the meadows and fisheries had already been taken over to The Yakuts 271

some extent by the toyons. The seizure of them was accompanied by a hard struggle since the communes resisted the toyon claims to their own land.

Such, in general terms, was the social structure of the Yakuts by the time the Russians arrived. Tsarist policy between the 17th and 19th centuries speeded up the development of social relations, so that Yakut society just before the October Revolution had already changed very much from what it had been three centuries ago. Nevertheless, many phenomena proved extremely stable and retained their archaic nature until recent times. Just before the Revolution the division of the Yakuts into strata according to the property they possessed was extremely marked. Most of the population did not even have enough cattle for the lunger norm (this norm, when the grade of the livestock was low, was considered to be two head of livestock per person), whereas in the few toyon households there were several dozen head of livestock per person. However, the unequal distribution of the livestock was by no means anything new for the Yakuts. But the question of land was different. The system which had grown up in the domain of land tenure was of comparatively recent origin. Since the arrival of the Russians in Yakutiya, the process of decomposition of the ancient communal-clan system of using the meadowland had been stepped up. The toyons were vigorously seeking to acquire the common lands. The development of private land ownership by the toyons continued to the 1760's, when certain measures introduced by the Russian administration gave it a new direction. In 1765, Yakuts were forbidden to buy or sell land, and in the next few years, through the activity of the Yakut Tribute Commission, the distribution of land in accordance with the so-called "sable" and "fox" taxes or parts of them was introduced among the Yakuts. Later on, in about 1820, this distribution of land assumed the form of the so-called "class system" of land usage, which legalized the extremely unequal distribution of the land, though, on the surface, it seemed to be something like common land usage. This "class system," which was later modified, had assumed the following form by the beginning of the 20th century.

The unit of measurement of land among the Yakuts was the "rick" (*ыгрыгэ*), a plot of land from which one hayrick could be mown (the size of the rick ranged from 10 to 30 cartloads, sometimes as many as 40 or 60). These allotments made up plots (*албугэр*) which were extremely varied in size, depending on the "class," and there were three or four "classes." One first-class plot (*бастыы* or *уһаллан албугэр*) was equal to two second-class plots (*орто албугэ*) and three or four third-class plots (*кэннiki* or *иччигирэй албугэр*). The population was also divided into three or four classes: the toyon households belonged to the first class, and received a first-class plot, the middle households were usually assigned to the second class and the poorer people to the third and fourth classes, each receiving the corresponding clan plot. Thus, the system itself gave the toyons plots of land which were three or four times larger than those of the poorer people. It is true that in return for this the toyons had somewhat greater obligations, but the difference in their extent was extremely small. However, this inequality was by no means the only thing. The toyons actually possessed much more land, having seized it in a variety of different ways. For example, they had several plots, rather than just one, by registering them in the names of their children, workers and so on. It was also the custom to give officials (who were more often than not themselves toyons) additional plots of land, so-called *указ-ыгрыгэ* (from the Russian word "ukaz" [edict]), for which, incidentally, there was no payment. The influential toyons also obtained extra plots called ugayy (or kharyy).

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

Furthermore, the toyons frequently enjoyed the right of possessing larger plots, sometimes through inheritance, cleared from the forest or formed at the site of a drained lake. The leasing of land was also common.

In the second half of the 19th century the custom of equalizing of the land each year in accordance with the yield of grass came into use. The harvest was evaluated by elected "deputies," and those whose harvest was poorer than it should have been in view of the plot had the right to an extra quota of hay, and vice versa. This was called bebierke (from the Russian word poverka [adjustment]). But in actual fact this custom did not reduce inequality, for the "deputies" always acted in favor of the more influential (toyon) section of the population, to which they themselves very often belonged.

Generally speaking, the toyons possessed a large proportion of the available land, and the best part, to boot. For example, in 1908 two-thirds of all the land in the First Ospetskiy Nasleg in the Dyupsyunskiy Ulus belonged to five toyon households. In the Suntarskiy Ulus the toyons, who made up only 7% of the total population, possessed approximately half the land. By 1917, 55% of all the usable land was possessed by the rich people. By owning land and livestock the toyons were in a position to exploit the needy masses of the population. The forms that the exploitation took were greatly varied; they included elements characteristic of capitalist relations and the older patriarchal-feudal forms, as well as hidden survivals of slavery. For example, it was the practice to hire laborers—khamnachyts—usually for a definite period, particularly for haymaking; they were hired to carry firewood, build yurts and so on. They were paid either in money or in kind; and the method used was usually the typical Yakut system of payment (remuneration in advance), which was called "to take a contract" from the toyon for this or that work. This system of contracting was very advantageous to the richer people, since they then had complete power over the laborers. In return for a paltry sum received in advance, the poor person was sometimes in the toyon's clutches for a long time to come.

The system of contracting was also applied in other cases; advances were paid by the toyons for the supply of a whole variety of products, ranging from butter and hay right down to wild duck eggs. This system was a form of extremely cruel exploitation. One observer (V. F. Troshchanskiy, an exiled member of Narodnaya Volya)[3] wrote outright that the "welfare of the population will not be improved as long as this system exists in its present form."

Another very common form of exploitation was the handing over of the milch cattle to the poor people by the toyons for their use and for feeding, the so-called system of khahaas. At an earlier stage (at the beginning of the 19th century) the livestock was taken over, usually for a year, from spring to spring, but at the end of the 19th century it was more common to take over the cattle for only the summer (the distribution of livestock for feeding during the winter—uostur—was a separate process). In return for use of the cow, the poor peasant had to pay the toyon, as was the custom, 30 pounds of melted butter and 12-15 poods of tar (frozen sour milk) in the autumn; sometimes this was replaced or supplemented by compulsory service for the benefit

[3] A revolutionary Narodnik organization.—Ed.

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2

During the first two years of the Soviet regime the situation hardly changed for the better. There was redistribution of the land in 1923-24, but the reform only partly cut down the amount of land used by the toyons and virtually made no difference to the burdensome state of the poor people. For example, the nonrepartitional land expropriated by the toyons on the basis of their "clearing right" was left in their possession. It was only the second land reform of 1929 that put an end to toyon coercion and created a situation in which the agriculture of Yakutiya could be improved. About 150,000 hectares of the best land, formerly owned by the toyons and kulaks, then passed into the hands of the working peasantry.

A collective-farm movement among the Yakut workers began in about 1930. In 1929 only 3.6 percent of the households were collectivized; by 1932 the figure was 41.7 percent, and by 1947 collective farms united 98.7 percent of all the households in the Yakut Republic. Collectivization gave a powerful impetus to the development of land cultivation, which prior to the Revolution had only advanced at a snail's pace. The sown area in Yakutiya had increased to 92,000 hectares by 1946, as opposed to 37,000 in 1917. Machine-tractor stations provide great assistance to the collective farms. Several hundred tractors, many combines and trucks are now at work in the fields. More than 20,000 agricultural machines are in operation. Trained teams of Yakut tractor-drivers, combine-operators, drivers and mechanics have begun to appear. Great advances have been made in the field of agricultural techniques. Particular attention has been given to retention of the moisture in the soil. The climate and soil conditions of Yakutiya make agriculture particularly difficult. In addition to the frequent droughts and spring frosts, some of the lakes dry up and deprive whole settlements of water. Over the last few years the Yakut collective farms have worked very hard to organize irrigation and flooding.

Many farms use water wheels and pumps to water their gardens. In 1952, more than 300,000 hectares of land, chiefly green meadows and pastureland, were irrigated by means of both permanent and temporary installations. The first specialized meadow-reclamation station had been set up in the Gorniy Rayon.

In 1952, M. G. Yegorov, member of the New Life collective farm in the Megino-Kangalasskiy Rayon, was awarded a Stalin Prize for the introduction of more modern methods in vegetable-growing on Yakutiyan collective farms. In the rigorous Yakutiyan climate Yegorov had been gathering 300-350 tsentners of cabbage, 180-190 tsentners of cucumbers, 170 tsentners of carrots, and 130 tsentners of tomatoes each year per hectare. In 1956 he was awarded the Order of Lenin.

Nevertheless, animal husbandry is still the chief branch of agriculture in Yakutiya. Poorly productive livestock was a legacy received by the collective farms from the past. The milk yield per cow averaged only 600 kilograms of milk per year. The Yakut farmers struggled hard for complete reorganization of their animal husbandry. The productivity of the cattle was improved throughout the Republic by crossbreeding. Techniques for the maintenance and pasturing of cattle were radically changed. Many standardized cattle-yards of an improved design were built. The work of the milkmaid was mechanized on many collective farms. On account of the extensive clearing of meadowland, the farms are in a position at the present time to provide their cattle with coarse fodder, although they still do not have enough concentrates.

An important part has been played in the development of animal husbandry by veterinary-zootechnical work. The rate of malignant anthrax among cattle has been reduced to nil. Precautionary measures in this